



SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Administration (SSA) Protects Social Security Numbers

?? How is Your Social Security Number (SSN) Used?

Employers and self-employed people use the SSN to report earnings from wages or business income to Social Security and the Internal Revenue Service. Your future Social Security benefits are based on the total earnings reported to Social Security. SSA also uses the SSN to pay Supplemental Security Income benefits. The SSN is perhaps the most frequently used record-keeping number in America, with financial institutions, unemployment benefits agencies, and educational loan organizations routinely using the SSN for their accounting systems. The SSN also is used by Medicare and Medicaid.

?? What is SSA Doing to Keep Your Social Security Record Safe from Identity Theft?

SSA is taking steps to make it harder for someone else to get or use your SSN. We are changing the way we issue new and replacement SSN cards. Additionally, we are working with other federal agencies to find ways to detect and prevent identity theft.

?? What Changes Has SSA Made in Issuing Social Security Numbers?

Individuals who apply for a Social Security card must furnish at least two documents to establish age, identity, and U.S. citizenship or lawful alien status. And now Social Security **must verify the birth record for all U.S.-born applicants age one and older** with the custodian of the record, usually the local bureau of vital statistics, before issuing an SSN.

?? Why is SSA Making This Change?

SSA is strengthening the integrity of the SSN by responding to the issues highlighted by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and dealing with the problem of identity fraud. The new process prevents those with criminal intent from using false or stolen birth records to get an SSN. It will help ensure the integrity of SSN records for everyone.

?? How Does This Change in the Birth Verification Process Affect You?

Currently it takes about two weeks for SSA to assign a number. This additional verification could add from three to twelve weeks to the process for receiving an SSN.

?? When Is the Change Effective?

The change is effective June 1, 2002.

?? Who is Affected?

This change affects U.S.-born people who are age one or older who:

- Apply for an original Social Security card; or
- Want to correct the date of birth on their Social Security record.